

ZENK

Charles Boardman Hawes

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ZENK

By Charles Boardman Hawes

Illustrated by A. L. Ripley

FROM the window of his room in the old lodging house on Lynde Street, Fairchild looked out across the roofs of Boston, a desert of slates and chimneys which seemed on that first evening to slope in an unbroken line from the blurred ring of yellow light about the gilded dome of the State House to the misty fringe of faint and distant lamps along the East Boston waterfront. Here, in the foreground, huge structures out-

lined by red and green and yellow lights towered high above the plain of roofs; there, beyond the town, the black harbor lay. Fascinated by the sight, Fairchild leaned on the sill and listened to noises from the street—footfalls reverberating loudly between brick walls, voices, near and loud, far and low; queer calls, distant music, a faint shouting.

A few months before, waking and leaning on his elbow, he had looked

out of a window in the gable of the gray farmhouse where he had lived all his life and had seen in the moonlight a hundred yards down the hill the old air-line stage road from Bangor to Calais, which ran through silvered treetops as far as eye could reach, with here and there paler masses of tilled land, in a great basin in the hills where the whole world seemed to sleep. He had been tired of all that and had wished never to see it again. Now he muttered, "Never no more." He was glad that he had come to Boston. Even when the dust of the parade ground had caked on his face and stung his dry throat and, with an odd twinge of homesickness, he had remembered the old stage road, the treetops and the broad valley, he had never wished to return.

THE OPEN ROAD

*The magazine for all men who
value the spirit of youth*



NO ONE more eagerly welcomes the return of lower prices than THE OPEN ROAD. Surely few people have felt the hardships of the years since 1917 more keenly than editors and publishers, and we, now that prices are falling and business conditions are becoming easier, are delighted to share with our readers, at the first possible moment, the benefits of changed circumstances. Our satisfaction in being able to lower the price of subscriptions is especially keen, because the magazine is beginning its third year with growing success and with the most auspicious outlook of any time in its career.

We shall continue to publish genuinely good fiction, both short stories and serials; and the range of our fiction in the past will serve as some indication of the variety that we shall offer in the future. There will be rollicking comedies, thoughtful serious tales, and fine stories of adventure, all of them built around real men and women. We shall take our readers to unfamiliar corners of our country, to strange districts of their own cities, to far-off seas and little-known nations—in short, to all manner of people in every part of the world and in old days as well as new.

We shall discuss in our articles and departments new projects of men of science, of explorers, and of leaders in every walk of life. We shall comment on the affairs of the world, month by month; on vocational and educational opportunities as they arise; on new books, new inventions, and the various movements for better citizenship and clean, honest government. Variety, sincerity and authoritativeness will continue to mark OPEN ROAD discussions of every kind; and we shall continue to welcome suggestions and criticism from our readers, for we wish our readers to help us make the magazine always stronger and better than before.

With this, the twenty-fifth number of your magazine and ours, we enter upon our third year, grateful for the wide support that has been accorded THE OPEN ROAD, and hopeful of breaking, during the next twelve months, all our records of success.



In the army they had called him "a good scout." He had an ear for music, an old mandolin and a broad contagious grin, which would flash across his face under the freckles and set the others chuckling. Now and then, when something struck him seriously, he would think promptly and accurately and take sides forcefully. But at other times he was a bit too easy-going, a bit too indolent, and quite too easily contented.

Instead of returning home when his last drill was done and he was mustered out with his pay, his uniform and his travel money, he had come to Boston and had drifted along Washington Street until he saw a sign, "Man Wanted," in a cigarshop window. Here was *life*, the antithesis of the lonely farm above the old air-line road. A city was the only place to get ahead in the world, he had thought, and he had opened the door and had entered the cigarshop, and had looked around and grinned.

The man behind the counter had glanced up and before he realized what he was doing, had grinned back at the young fellow who stood by the door. He could not help it.

"Well?"

"Sign says you want a man."

"Sure."

"Well, I'm it."

"You grinning gazabo!" the man

behind the counter had chuckled. "Come in. The job's yours."

That evening Fairchild came entirely by chance to the old lodging house on Lynde Street and hired an attic room, which cost only a dollar and a half a week. There was a big open garret on the other side of his threshold, full of rafters and beams and cobwebs and shadowy, dusty trunks, and beyond the garret there was a room in the opposite gable

"What do you know of life? Nothing. Get out of this cheap lodging house! Get out of that cigar stand! Go back to Jordan if you wish—or set your foot on the hard road up the mountain."

similar to his own. The door of the other room had stood half open when he climbed the stairs and he had seen a few pieces of dusty furniture. He idly wondered, now, if any one lived there; but he thought most of the city that lay below and above and around him. It seemed as if all the world were spread before him there in the darkness,—not just one city so much as all cities. He breathed deeply and felt that at last he was free. His young face was grave now. The comrades of his gayer moments would scarcely have known him.

Presently he left the window and began to read a newspaper by the light of the flame that danced above the gas jet. By and by he was startled to hear a door creak on the other side of the attic. Next there came a curious *tap-tap—tap-tap*. Puzzled, and a little nervous, he raised his head. The *tap-tap—tap-tap* came nearer; it paused outside his own door; some one knocked.

"Come in," Fairchild called.

A strange figure stood on the threshold, a lean, old man with the face of one who is always listening. In his right hand he carried a slim cane with which he felt his way, thrusting it forward and from side to side quickly and lightly. Holding his left hand high before him, he moved the long slender fingers with a nimble motion that suggested fluttering.

"I am Zenk," he said. "I live across the hall."

Fairchild saw that he was a Jew and blind.

Zenk felt for a chair and sat down with a composure that irritated his host. "So the old woman has let this dog-hole at last!" he growled. "If you're paying her a dollar a week you're giving her twice its worth."

"That so?" Fairchild disliked Zenk from the first moment, and his face, instead of breaking into that broad, freckled grin, grew hard and repellant; but because the man was blind he tried to smother his antagonism.

"Yes, sad to relate, it is so." Zenk spoke with a sort of long-suffering irony that his thin, solemn features made the more expressive, while with his left hand he explored the table. "Behold," he said, "I feel a book. You are a student."

"Not much of a student."

"What is your name?"

"My name?" The young fellow hesitated, then with a slight but impatient gesture, said, "Fairchild."

Zenk perceived the stiffness of the reply and laughed. "I'll come again when you're settled." He rose to his feet and went slowly out, but as he left the room, he paused and turned back for a moment. "I'm glad you're here. You're the sort to make a good neighbor."

"Lord!" Fairchild thought as he crawled into bed, "how he fidgets! His fingers were everywhere! Pfah! He makes me sick."

It was not pleasant to remember that the Jew slept just across the open attic and that he was the only other person at the top of the old lodging house. Not only was he a blind, prying Jew: he was nervous, bitter and ironical.

Again Fairchild remembered that night when he had raised himself on his elbow and had looked down in the moonlight at the old air-line stage road. Even now on the table beside his bed lay a letter that was going to travel all the way to Maine and out from Bangor along the stage road up over Chick's Hill and down to the lonely farm. He had no desire to follow the letter. He would rather stay and see life and learn a business. But when he thought of the blind man across the attic he turned uneasily and clicked his teeth together. For some reason he was farther than ever out of his usual good-natured, happy-go-lucky mood; it seemed as if Zenk had driven him away from it.

Perhaps if he had known how much he was to see of the blind man he would have given up his room at the end of the week and have never come back. That first night was only the beginning. After a time he grew accustomed to the blind man's slow, irregular foot-steps and to the tapping of his cane along the hall. He even got used to frequent visits when Zenk would come and stand in the door and say querulously, "You're home. I hear you rustling away at the papers," although he had thought at first that he could not endure it and had many times planned to run away from the old house and find other lodgings. When he thought of Zenk sitting alone in the opposite gable he was uncomfortably aware of the haunting emptiness of the cobwebbed attic where trunks clustered in ghostly groups. But his room was only a dollar and a half a week, and he always thought that each visit might be the last, so he stayed on, "just a week or two longer."

A month and more passed. Fairchild was reading by that same flickering gas-light when he heard Zenk's cane — *tap-tap*, — pause, — *tap-tap* — then Zenk's soft rap on the door. It was getting to be an old story. The blind man came at almost any hour of the night now, yet what was a fellow to do? He couldn't be all the time turning a blind man away. Fairchild did not smile; when Zenk rapped, he never smiled.

"Come in," he called.

Laying his magazine on the table, he watched the blind man find a chair and explore the room with swift, lightly moving cane and eager,

searching fingers. It was always thus: the knock, the cautious entry, the groping for the chair, and the quick thrusts of cane and nimble fingers. As always, Zenk leaned back after a little and breathed a sigh of satisfaction.

"You work in a tobacco shop," he said. "If you were to start a cigarette factory, a great big factory, mind you, how would you go about to build up a Japanese business?"

"What do you think I want to do," Fairchild retorted, "buck a government monopoly and compete with six-cent cigarettes?"

The blind man smiled. "Where did you learn that?"

"In a book."

Zenk held out his hands, palm to palm, and tapped his fingers together meditatively. "You ought not to be in that shop."

"Why not?" the boy demanded.

"You are too smart. You ought to have a bigger job."

"Huh! I get fifteen a week. That's good money for a beginner."

"My dear boy, you've been there six weeks. What will you get when you've been there six years? Maybe twenty dollars. You ought not to be there at all. You're too smart for that place." The blind man got up, restlessly. "Too smart." He felt for the door with his cane and opened it. The attic was dark as Egypt except for the light from the boy's gas-jet. Suddenly some one called from the foot of the stairs:

"Mr. Zenk! Mr. Zenk!"

"Well, what do you want?" Zenk growled.

"What time is it?"

For a moment the blind man stood like a statue. His shadow reached far across the floor and a grotesque silhouette of his head was cast on the opposite wall. Then he spoke, but with a contemptuous twitch of his thin shoulders. "Twenty-six minutes past ten."

"What did I tell you," the voice in the hall whispered distinctly. "Right, to the minute. He can do it every time." And the door slammed.

"Fools!" Zenk snorted.

Zenk closed Fairchild's door behind him and Fairchild heard him walking across the attic in the darkness.

"I hate that blind man," Fairchild thought. His face was oddly stern and old.

It irritated him even more that Zenk did not like the landlady's niece. Fairchild thought her charming because she had sophisticated circles under her eyes and smudged her cheeks with rouge and carried about an aura of scented toilet water, and when she told him how clever he was, as she leaned close to him in the moving-picture theater, and bubbled



It was up on Tremont Row, "I was waiting for you," the man said, and the man was Zenk.

over with laughter when he grinned in his contagious way, he felt that he had become at last a man of the world. She had been at the boarding house only three days, too!

A week later Fairchild crept

stealthily upstairs and began to undress—without a light, because the blind man was so often waiting for him in the darkness of the room across the attic. But his precautions were useless. Before he got his

collar off he heard the warning *tap-tap* of the cane.

"S-s-so!" Zenk hissed, thrusting his head in the door. "You're still traveling with the old cat's kitten, are you?"

It was insufferable, yet Fairchild could not bring himself to treat Zenk with anything harsher than a certain grudging tolerance. You can't hit a cripple. And down deep under the antagonism that he felt whenever Zenk appeared, the young fellow's good nature went so far that it became a weakness.

Lighting the gas, suddenly aware of the folly of trying to deceive a sightless man by a dark room and exasperated by his own stupidity, he watched the blind beggar's fingers as they played on the arm of the chair, on the table, on the old couch, on the newspapers, fluttering here and there, everywhere within reach of the long arms, exploring inquisitively with the nimble, irregular flight of a butterfly.

"Well, what are you grouching for?" he snapped, worn, at last, almost beyond endurance.

The old man did not take offense. Somehow he seemed never to take offense at the boy, although he was crusty enough with the rest of the lodgers. "Leave her alone," he growled amiably.

"A fellow ought to go 'round with girls," Fairchild retorted. "It's human nature."

"Human nature?" Zenk laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh. "She's not the right kind," he said.

"She's a good girl."

"Good? Yes, perhaps. But ——" Zenk's fingers spun an invisible web in the air—"her virtue is abstract. Her taste is rotten."

"You're a liar!"

Zenk smiled wryly. "I can smell her perfumes," he whispered. "I know the kind she is." And not another word would he say.

After Zenk had gone, Fairchild sat staring at the closed door, breathing hard and drumming with tightly clenched fists on the arms of his chair. He felt as if he could kill Zenk.

When the clocks were striking three next morning he heard some one rapping cautiously yet insistently at his door, *tap-tap—pause—tap-tap—pause!* Moonlight was falling on the roofs and as he rolled over in bed he saw the city below him in the night, its yellow street-lamps shining through blue mist just as on that evening so long ago he had seen the old stage-road and the great forest.

"Who's there?" he called in a rage. He knew well enough who it was.

"It is I—Zenk. Let me in."

Fairchild put his feet on the cold floor. "Miserable beggar," he muttered.

"I hear you," said the whisper from outside the door. "I have sharp ears."

Taken quite aback, Fairchild sheepishly turned the key. "Come in," he growled. For a moment he was

amused at his own discomfiture and he unwittingly smiled, but the smile quickly passed.

The sure, confident motions of the blind man as he emerged from the cobwebby spaces of the attic seemed, in the almost darkness, uncanny. The cane explored the chairs with the same unhesitating accuracy.

"Wait," said Fairchild, "I'll light the gas."

Zenk laughed shortly. "No, no! I travel always by night—in darkness. I need no gas. For that reason I am a good lodger. They make a discount on my rent."

"Well?"

Zenk laughed again. "You wonder why I've come?" he asked. "I am lonesome."

Fairchild gave an angry grunt. "And you woke me up because you were lonesome! You ought to be asleep."

"Asleep?" Zenk's fingers traveled across the table, unseen but revealing their presence by a tiny rustle of sound. "You don't know the joys of insomnia. It is an interesting but often exasperating complaint. I can't sleep. Never mind, I'll go soon." The fingers rustled across the couch and over the table. "Here's a letter. It came today, didn't it?"

Fairchild started. The keenness of the man's touch and intuition seemed doubly weird in the unlighted room.

Zenk in some way perceived the start and chuckled. "It is from a girl," he whispered, "and her name begins with K." Zenk paused, then chuckled again.

Fairchild was convinced that the man's extraordinary hearing had detected even the quickening of his breath.

"Keep away from the girl who writes letters to a man under the same roof," Zenk stood up. "What would you do," he asked, "if some one was always after you?"

Fairchild looked at him queerly. Once down in Maine there had been a man who thought some one was always after him. Now and then he had let fall a hint of his obsession and one day he had gone where no one knew him and had got a revolver. They had taken the revolver before he shot any one and had sent him away with an officer and a doctor. Was Zenk like that?

"Why," Fairchild replied slowly, "if I thought any one was after me I'd see —"

"A specialist?" Zenk interpolated sharply. Then he laughed. "Boy, you're on the wrong track. Did you ever have a brother?"

"No."

"Closer than a brother—a brother is very near you, and yet sometimes you turn back to back and

measure the distance round the world."

"What do you mean?"

Zenk laughed and waved his thin hands in the air. "Mean? I mean nothing always. I am lonesome and yet I would be alone. People bore me because they are afraid of me. I can tell you now of one who is afraid of me. He is a composite of curious humors and at present fear is in the ascendency. There will come a time when certain other emotions will outweigh fear,—greed, for instance; but he will always be swayed by emotion. He is intrinsically weak. And yet ——" Zenk paused—"and yet I think that some day he will kill me. One must be strong to kill a man, or very weak, and if you stand back to back you must see a long way before your eyes meet."

"Well, I'll be going." He felt for the young fellow's feet with his cane. "It's a cold night. You ought to wear slippers. Thanks for letting me in. You've been good to me and I'll not forget it."

After Fairchild had closed the door behind his untimely guest and had locked it, he swore under his breath and was startled to hear Zenk chuckle. Then the slow steps went down the hall with the *tap-tap—pause—tap-tap*, of the cane.

"Lonesome!" he ejaculated. "Lonesome! Good Lord, what nerve!"

Feeling for the envelope that the blind man had discovered, he took it up. Presently he lighted the gas. The letter was anonymous, of course, and had been intended as a joke. It had pleased him immensely. But the blind man's keenness astounded him. Even he, the boy, had not been sure of the identity of the sender. The name of the landlady's niece was Kate.

There was a great deal in his neighbor's life that the young fellow, or, for that matter, any of the others in the boarding house, did not understand. Where, for example, Zenk picked up his curious, diabolically personal knowledge of the various members of the household: the name of the discreet dealer in unusual second-hand goods of whom the landlady had economically purchased her iron-gray locks; the particular pawnbroker in whose keeping reposed the diamond ring that until last week had sparkled on the third finger of the traveling man who lived in the big front room on the second floor. Fairchild hated Zenk's keen face, the listening tilt of his head, the mocking, cynical courtesy of his inquiries for the landlady's niece; but most of all he hated those persistently, nervously fluttering fingers!

Sometimes he wondered what Zenk did by day and asked him. But Zenk would shrug the question off, un-

answered, and give him strange morsels of gossip or unexpected bits of information.

It was the greatest insolence of all, Fairchild thought, when one day Zenk waylaid him on the street. In the late afternoon, as Fairchild was hurrying home from the cigar store through the crowd that swarms the sidewalks about sunset, a man touched his arm. It was up on Tremont Row where jostling blue-jackets, ponderous Jewesses, Italians with rings in their ears, beggars, itinerant peddlers, pawnbrokers, auctioneers, and unwashed children, the spawn of the North End, crowded and streamed and eddied past the bright windows of beer-gardens and under the lights of moving-picture houses.

"I was waiting for you," the man said. It was Zenk.

"For me?" Fairchild stared at him in utter amazement. "How did you know me?"

The blind man took hold of his sleeve and stepped along beside him as he edged through the press. "How do *you* know your friends?" he retorted.

"By their looks."

"I know mine by their sound. Not many can fool me." He kept his cane in motion, swinging it back and forth in front of him, brushing the

legs of passers and barely touching the pavement with it.

"By their sound?" Fairchild glanced sidewise at the keen, hollow-eyed face of the blind man. Was the fellow a wizard? Without sight the devil himself could scarcely have picked his own son out of the crowds that passed. But the blind man forged ahead in a confidence that the crowd seemed to justify, for always the blank stare of his sightless eyes and the exploring touch of his swinging cane opened before him a lane through the traffic.

After a time Zenk spoke again. "You came in late last night."

"Well, what of it?"

"Don't be angry. I'm a friend of yours, am I not?"

The kindness in Zenk's voice was pathetic and appealed to that side of Fairchild's nature which had enabled him to endure the blind man's advice.

"Sure, but ——" After all, he hated Zenk.

They left the more crowded streets now and turned into an alley where the going was easier.

"Well, what's a friend for, if it isn't to tell a man honestly when something is going crookedly? Go around with 'em all you want. I'm not one to say a man shouldn't go around with a girl—the more the

merrier, I say. But marrying is different. A man ought not to tie himself up, not if he has a chance to go on in life, anyway. You're too smart to work in a tobacco shop. You ought to go to school—college—get a real job. Maybe then you'll want to go around with a girl some day. Not a girl that says 'ain't' and shovels beans with her knife. A girl who will help you go up. Way up."

Fairchild looked with angry, bewildered amazement at the blind man.

"I have good ears," Zenk said. "Good ears!" After a time he added,

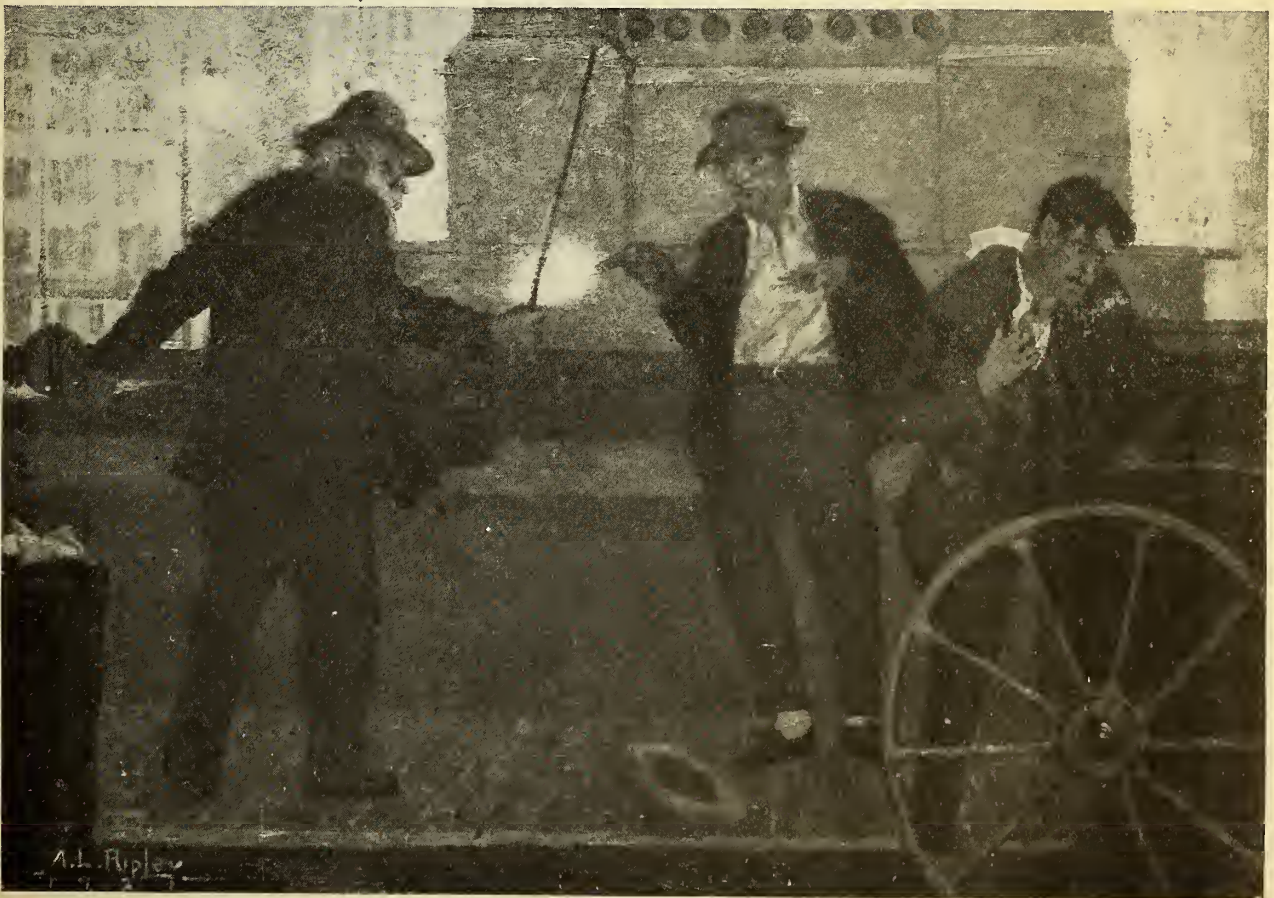
"But not many friends."

"Friends!" Fairchild thought. "He calls me his friend!"

He chuckled inwardly at the irony of it—but it was a bitter chuckle, with none of the kindly humor of his broad, freckled grin—and let the old man's hand rest on his arm. Looking down at the hand, he noticed the whiteness and slenderness of the fingers, which gave no hint of trade or craft. As they came to the lodging house on Lynde Street Fairchild felt in his arm, on which the hand rested, a sort of kin-aesthetic revulsion.

That night, before he fell asleep, he thought about the future—and the landlady's niece. He wondered if after all the blind man could be right.

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Zenk laughed. "You're afraid," he said scornfully. "Afraid! Where's your friend? I knew you'd never come alone. Shoot again! YOU CAN'T KILL ME."

Scholar, Athlete and Government Executive

LAST spring when the appointment of the new United States Commissioner of Education was under consideration at Washington it was only natural that there should be many candidates for the position. For one reason or another, however, just the right man for the place was not in sight, though various delegations had visited Secretary Fall of the Interior—of whose department the Bureau of Education is a part—for the purpose of proving to him that they had discovered an ideal candidate. One day after a particularly persistent group had at last departed from his office, Secretary Fall happened to remark to Senator Ernst of Kentucky who had dropped in:

"I wish someone would suggest exactly the right man for this job—say," he added humorously, "a man six feet three inches tall!"

"I'll suggest him myself," said the senator, "—John Tigert, he's six feet three—and aside from his height he has *other* qualifications for the place!"

"I'd like to see him and have him meet the President," declared Secretary Fall.

A few weeks later Mr. Tigert was nominated and confirmed as United States Commissioner of Education. The six feet three inches, of course, did not "turn the trick": what really counted was that the tall Kentuckian is a man of scholarly attainments, wide experience and unusual executive ability—qualifications necessary in one who is to fill the important position of United States Com-



Dr. John J. Tigert

missioner of Education. But the physical side of the man is interesting, for he has made good use of his brawn as well as of his brain. At Vanderbilt University, which was founded by his grandfather, he played on the varsity foot ball team three years, was elected captain in 1904 and picked as All-Southern fullback. At Oxford, whither he went as the first Rhodes scholar from Tennessee, he represented Pembroke College in rowing, tennis and cricket, and played

first base on the baseball team that won the championship of England.

In the midst of all this athletic activity young Tigert won honors as a student; he took the Latin and Greek prize when he entered Vanderbilt; he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and chosen to deliver the commencement oration when he was graduated. After college he taught at Central College and at the age of twenty-seven he became president of Kentucky Wesleyan. Later at the University of Kentucky, where he held the chairs of philosophy and psychology, he was director of athletics and made a name by coaching some remarkably good football teams.

He is a man of uncommon physical and mental vigor, whose continued love of athletics found expression in his consenting to officiate in the Harvard-Centre football game this fall. It is, in the opinion of THE OPEN ROAD, a fine thing to have at the head of our education system a man who combines with proved scholarship the ability and enthusiasm to appear as an official on the field of a university football game.

Zenk

(Continued from page 9)

For several days he did not see the girl. But one evening she waited for him in the hall and followed him out doors. "Come on," she said. "Don't be a grouch. Take me to the pictures."

"Sure," he replied with an attempt at his old gallantry, and he bravely tried to grin as if he were in his old jovial mood, but things troubled him that he only half understood and his smile was not a success.

"What's got you now?" she asked plaintively, taking his arm. "You didn't used to be like this."

For some reason he was tired of her perfume, which now seemed so cheap; the sophisticated shadows under the eyes, the touch of rouge and the bit of powder had lost much of their power to charm. But he tried to shake off this new indifference.

"Nothing has got me," he said. "I guess I don't feel very lively. That's all."

She took his arm as they walked, but she could not bring back their old comradeship. They left the theater early and parted in the hall shortly and without ceremony.

He was angrier that night than ever when he heard the blind man's inevitable steps in the hall, but Zenk seemed not to notice. He came in, waving his cane here and there and fluttering his slim fingers, and sat down in his usual chair, well pleased with himself and the world.

"Fine night," he remarked.

Fairchild retorted irritably. Zenk, Zenk, Zenk! Could he never get away from him?

For a time Zenk ran his cane about on the floor in a whirligig pattern. "Of course," he said at last, "you can stay on in the tobacco shop and get fifteen dollars a week now and may be twenty, ten years from now. But if you were to go to night school, with a little tutoring, say, and Harvard and, after that, law school—lots of fellows work their way. You ought not to be here." He laughed sadly and added, "Neither ought I." There was a kindly protectiveness in his attitude, something so friendly and wistful that it seemed almost fine, yet Fairchild, usually so good-natured, saw only that the old fellow was obtrusive and detestable.

"Aw, shucks!" he growled. "What good 'll school do me?" He stopped short. Somehow the blind man made it seem so near that it was almost possible.

Zenk drew a deep breath and threw his head suddenly forward. "Boy," he cried, and his grim, stern face grew

more intent than ever, "you have turned your back on Jordan; you are seeking for Abanah and Pharpar. What do you know of life? Nothing. Get out of this cheap lodging house! Get out of that cigar stand! Go back to Jordan, if you wish—a man can *live* in Israel. Or set your foot on the hard road up the mountain. I don't care which you do, so long as you leave this leprous place!" The blind man's brow darkened and his voice rang in a way that stirred the young fellow strangely. "Why, boy, the best thought of all the ages is waiting for you over in the public library yonder."

The idea fired the young fellow's imagination. After all, men succeeded in just such wild schemes, and college seemed vastly less chimerical here than it had on the worn-out farm by the old stage road. "May be I'll try it some day," he said. "I used to think I'd do it."

Zenk leaned back without comment. His fingers, as they travelled across the table, found books on tobacco culture that the boy had got when he first came; but on the books they detected a layer of dust. Dust had gathered on so many of Fairchild's eager plans! "I wonder," he said. He knew that the boy was immature, even weak, and yet there was something in him that gave hope of strength to come. In the dry dust of the blind man's cynical old heart the seed of affection had actually taken root.

When Zenk had gone back to his own room, Fairchild, divided between his hatred of the blind man and his eager interest in all that the blind man had suggested, sat up until very late. It seemed as if he had scarcely fallen asleep, when he started up in bed, all at once wide awake.

"Boy! Boy!" The words came in a hoarse whisper.

"What do you want?" Fairchild cried angrily.

"Open the door."

This time Zenk did not enter. "Come to my room," he whispered.

"Come! Come, quick!"

"Why?"

"Burglars are trying to break in."

Fairchild was angry. So many people had played upon his credulity when he first came to the city! "Go chase yourself!" he cried. "Are my eyes green by night?"

"I tell you there are burglars coming up the wall. Come!"

"How would they get up the wall?"

What would they come to your room for?"

"Come!" Zenk seized the young fellow's arm. Through the thin pajamas' sleeve his hand closed so hard on the muscles that they ached. "Hurry!"

Barefooted, the two scuffled along the uncarpeted attic into the blind man's little den.

"Listen!" Zenk whispered.

Fairchild heard nothing.

"Do you hear them?"

Fairchild shook his head, and realized that the blind man by some unique sense was aware of the motion even in the dark.

"Listen!" Zenk drew the young fellow over to the window. "Now listen and wait."

For a time Fairchild continued to hear nothing, then a bit of metal dropped, clinking, to the alley. Suddenly heavy breathing became audible just below the sill and some one tried the screen. When it did not give, the intruder began very carefully to jimmy it up.

Zenk's fingers played softly on the young fellow's cheeks, then rested for an admonitory moment on his lips. Shrinking back silently, Fairchild could see against the window the blind man's silhouette as he crouched, waiting, listening, seeming to smile.

The screen slid up little by little and presently a hand reached in and grasped the sill. Behind the hand there appeared a cap and then a broad, ugly head. As if that were the signal for which he had been waiting, the blind man lifted the knobbed end of his cane and struck the hand three times, ferociously, before it could be withdrawn. An electric torch flashed a single beam of light into the room, where it rested for a moment on Fairchild's face. Then the light went out and hand and head disappeared.

A rumble of fluent cursing came from under the window and some one cried, "Go on up! Go on up! We can soon settle him!"

"Speak," Zenk whispered. Then he called, "Not so fast, friend, not so fast! I'm not alone."

The cursing stopped and was followed by a subdued murmur of voices.

"How did they get up there?" Fairchild asked. In excitement he was breathing hard.

"That's easy. Ladder to the second floor. roof. Blinds to the window."

"But what made them come?"

Zenk laughed. "Faith." Then

ironically, he added, "They think I am rich enough to be worth robbing."

The sound of scrambling came from far below.

"You can look now," Zenk suggested. "Go on, put your head out."

Raising the screen a little more, Fairchild saw a dark figure going over the second story roof just as the uncanny blind man had indicated.

"Why don't you call the police?" he asked.

"The police? What would a poor blind beggar have to do with the police? Show's over now. Go along to bed. I'll call you again if I need help. You're a good lad and I'll not forget you, even though the time has come for me to flit." Zenk's fingers fluttered over the sill and under the screen. He leaned close to the sill and explored the side of the house as far as his long arm would reach. "I could go down there if I wanted," he said. "I know the way. There's not much in this end of the old town, or any end, for that matter, that I don't know. Go along to bed."

That night Fairchild did not think again about Zenk's casual remark of a time for flitting. He went back to bed, too much excited to sleep, and first thought about the men who had so strangely climbed the wall, then about Zenk himself, and then about all Zenk's talk of school and college and success. The thought of school and of a broad, successful life grew upon him more and more. It followed him to work in the morning and haunted him all day long, and drove him restlessly through the streets and on a long walk up the esplanade by the river.

He did not find Zenk when he came home that night, or the next. He brushed past some one standing on the street corner and did not see that the person turned to look after him; nor did he notice later that the figure was still there, a shadow against a wall. He was full of the new idea and there was only the blind man, little as he liked him, to whom he could talk about it, so he went three times to the den at the other end of the attic and then lay awake listening for the irregular steps and the *tap-tap* of the cane. The third morning he went yet again to Zenk's room, and found no sign that the blind man had come back in the night, and remembered the talk of flitting; but before he left for the day he did find on his own table a dusty card on which his initials were scribbled in the stiff, angular writing characteristic of the blind, and after that, "Park Square—twelve-thirty A. M.—Zenk." He puzzled all day over the message.

At the end of the day's work he went to a Cornhill book-shop and after an hour among the dusty

shelves came away with a bundle of books—Caesar, Cicero, Virgil, an algebra and geometry, and a Roman history. "First of all," he thought, I'll review. When I've covered the old ground I'll look up a night-school."

Piling the books on the table, he opened the topmost and tried to read, but his mind was mutinous and repeated over and over, "Park Square—twelve thirty in the morning." Ten o'clock came, and eleven. At half past eleven he closed the book with a bang and went down the dark flights of stairs to the hall where a low gas flame burned day and night. Once out on the street, he crossed the town slowly, walked down Washington Street to Essex, through Essex to Harrison Avenue and round by Beach and Oxford Street and back again in a long rectangle. Few people were astir in China-town, and those few moved with baggy flapping sleeves, in an uncanny silence. It was after midnight when he passed through Eliot Street. Most windows were dark, but here and there a light showed wanly—in a lodging house on the third floor, in a Greek restaurant, far back in a little tailor shop. He stopped at the triangle of grass around the statue of Lincoln. Now and then people passed, their steps clicking sharply on the sidewalk, but for the most part sounds of life were from a distance, and when a trolley car came booming through the square with clanging bells and bright windows it seemed like something from another world. After the car had passed, the square settled down into a deeper silence than before.

When he saw a man coming toward him from the end of Broadway, Fairchild thought at first that it was Zenk and started to meet him, but almost at once he saw that the man carried no cane and that he walked more swiftly than the blind man. Fairchild stopped but the man came straight up to him and looked into his face.

"It's you, is it?" he said. "Where's he gone?"

"Where's who gone?" said Fairchild.

The man laughed. "That don't go down. Tell me."

Fairchild stepped back.

Crossing his hands, the man took hold of Fairchild's coat collar on each side of his throat. "Tell me," he repeated.

When Fairchild tried to wrest himself free, the man, maintaining his hold on the coat collar, closed his wrists on the young fellow's throat like a pair of shears and cut his wind so that, strong though he was, he was almost helpless. "Tell me," he repeated, and laughed again.

"Tell you what?" Fairchild gasped.

He found that no effort of his could dislodge the man's hands.

"Where he is?" said the man.

"Where he is?" a third voice close at hand repeated. "Where he is? I wonder where he is." Silently, like a shadow, a dark figure with a swinging cane had come around the raised triangle of grass. Suddenly the newcomer lifted the knobbed end of the cane and struck with unerring accuracy at the place where he had heard the man's voice. Perhaps the man's hoarse breathing guided him; certainly his was no chance stroke. "Oh, you blundering fool! You never could ha' got me without I let you."

Shoving the boy away, the man reeled dizzily under the blow and leaned against the bronze rail; his hand came out from under his coat; simultaneously there was a flash and a quick report.

Zenk laughed. "You're afraid," he said scornfully. "Afraid! Where's your friend? I know you'd never come alone. Shoot again! *You can't kill me.*"

The man stepped back and stared at Zenk without a word.

"I say *you can't kill me!*" Zenk repeated harshly.

The man put his hand on his throat and gulped.

"You're fooled—fooled—fooled. You're a coward, a thief and a fool! Do you think that you'll get any money of mine? I've made my will. A lawyer wrote it out for me. I've left you one cent to remember me by. One cent only. Listen! I hear a policeman."

The man turned and ran and Fairchild, up to this point stupified by all that had happened, made a motion as if to chase him. But Zenk put out a restraining hand. "Let him go," he whispered. "He's my brother. I guess he got me. But he'll get nothing else, the stupid one. You're twenty-four hours late, lad. I was here alone last night. I knew they were on my track today, but I didn't intend you should suffer for it."

Zenk sank down on the pavement, his old hat resting against Fairchild's knee, just as the officer came running up.

"Who was that? Which way did he go?" the officer demanded. "Quick! Speak up! D' you know who he was?"

Zenk shook his head.

The officer looked at him closely, and stooping, struck his club three times against the curbing. The sound rang out sharply on the night air. Other policemen came running and from somewhere a crowd gathered mysteriously, as crowds always do.

"He went down that way," the first officer cried. "I saw him shoot and run and then I lost him. This

fellow a friend of yours, boy? Better go to the hospital with him. Name?—Address?—All right. You'll be called up later. Keep your eye on the young fellow, Jim. He'll have to go to headquarters. Easy, there, easy!"

Fairchild found himself in the ambulance with Zenk, whom he hated, lying there beside him, and with Zenk's thin hand resting on his arm. It was unreal; it was impossible. Yet it was true. And Zenk died in the ambulance.

In the evening, when Fairchild came stumbling wearily up to the lodging house on Lynde Street, the landlady met him in the hall. Her towering column of gray hair lay far over on one side and her voice was shrill with excitement.

"Have you heard?" she cried. "Have you heard the news? Oh, my goodness, have you heard the news?"

Fairchild stared at her angrily. What news was there that he cared about?

"Look!" From behind her back the landlady whipped out a paper. "Read that!" she screamed.

The headlines stared the young fellow in the face, big black letters across the whole page:

BLIND CLAIRVOYANT KILLED MYSTERY MAN'S SECRET REVEALED LEAVES FORTUNE

By the dim gaslight in the dark hall, he read the story word by word. Zenk, blind beggar by night, had been by day Prospero Zenotabi, "the masked fortune-teller," who sat in his strange "studio" on Columbus Avenue and revealed to hundreds the "secrets of the past and future!" In a great many places in Boston the name of Prospero Zenotabi would have meant nothing, but to the credulous lodgers in that house on Lynde Street it meant much. That Prospero Zenotabi himself had lived in that little fifth-floor den was astounding. And his will, drawn hard and fast by a real lawyer, left every dollar, every penny but one to "Luther Fairchild, my only friend."

Where had the reporters learned all that? Fairchild wondered. He had known nothing of it. He went off to his room, carrying the paper with him.

Stripped of the journalists' imaginative touches, Zenk's bequest amounted to some five thousand dollars in bills of large denomination, and — particularly mentioned — a

watch. It was a rare old watch in a round silver case, the paper said, and when a certain lever was pressed a tiny silver gong sounded the hour, the quarter and the minute. Fairchild smiled, remembering the blind man's marvelous hearing. *Five thousand dollars*, he thought, and caught his breath. Yes, he would go to college! He would climb! He would make a man of himself! It was as if Zenk had left him something vastly dearer than mere money, something vastly more personal; as if he had left him a clear mind and an iron will. Fairchild's eyes, looking for almost the first time into the real future, grew keener and shrewder and stronger; his mouth set in a thin straight line. Yes, he would make a man of himself. Zenk had shown him how.

He laid out paper and took up his pen to write to the old farm above the stage road, but words did not come. He had thought he hated Zenk, but now he turned to the door with an eagerness that changed, strangely, to bitter loneliness. Never again would he hear the *tap-tap* of the blind man's cane or the soft rustle of his flying fingers. The pen rolled off the table and fell unnoticed on the floor.

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The Haul of the Wild

(Continued from page 48)

Tom and Jerry were the old pair of white horses he had bought from a fire station nearby to save them from being pensioned off to the doubtful mercies of some junk dealer. There would be a long procession with two plump horses prancing at the fore, plumed harness, trappings a-jingle, brass band and all!

"So that's it! What'll your lodge pay me?"

Lister was stumped. His sense of relative values had weakened in proportion to his ardent desire to get those horses. He knew to a penny the hourly rate for hack hire, but to him the use of Tom and Jerry was worth about anything. He was afraid to speak; afraid of being too high, or, worse yet, being scorned as being too low. He drew a deep breath and hazarded a guess.

"Ten dollahs!"

"Whew! Bad as that? You boys must want 'em. Well go out back and see old Pete at the stable. Tell him I sent you. And remember, drive 'em slow in the sun. Guess they're too old to be skittish; fine for a funeral."

The negro felt a surge of affection for this man who, although white of skin, could still pause to give heed to a dark man's troubles. He even felt a qualm of conscience at the real reason why he wanted the two horses; a reason not even now suspected by Mr. Seth, despite a life-long acquaintance with Lister's race.

He fished in his watch pocket for the money.

"And oh, by the way," added Mr. Haywood, as if in an afterthought, "forget that ten dollahs. Just you see that they get a good rubbing down when you bring them back. Yes, and a lump of rock-salt apiece in each manger. Now get out of here! I've got other work to do besides pot-terin' around with a lot of coon business!"

Lister went out chuckling. How fine those two big horses would look. A thousand times better than the two racks of bones at the livery. He wondered if during those three years in the shed behind the store they had forgotten their life-long schooling.

NOW THE house where Lister dwelt with his mother stood in a sandy lot beside the very road that led to the Pearly Gates cemetery. By it the cortège would pass, a fact greatly appreciated by feminine neighbors who were already gathering in some numbers to be ready for the event.

At the farther end of the lot, close beside the road, stood an antiquated pile which had once been a barn. Cracks were gaping to the four winds; it was roof-less and door-less, and scorned even as a source of kindling for the Atwell kitchen stove. Upon this structure Lister gazed with speculative eyes.

"Wisht we could sort o' brighten up the place in time," he stated dolefully to the assemblage. "That ol' stave pile uv a barn is a disgrace to modern cullud folks. People gwine laff an' say that we-all is too lazy to clean up round heah."

"Don't know 'bout the modern folk's pa'ht, but a match an' a can o' kerosene will answer yo' cryin', Lister," offered Chigger Sneeds, who had dropped in for a moment.

Lister's face beamed. Chigger's unconscious aid was little short of spooky. Things certainly seemed to be coming his way at last.

"The ve'y idee!. Chiggah, we kin do it this same evenin' befo' de fun'al sta'hts. C'mon, lets us eat."

After lunch he drew the Chigger aside and spoke long and earnestly with him.

"You is the on'y one whut kin do it. We got to have some 'scuse fer doin' it, er mebbe you spends the night in the callaboose."

"Don't fret on that. Any time a white cop runs me down it 'll be frost in July! Leave it to me, Lister. When I gits a telefoam call f'um you, then is when I sets the fiah."

"Fine!—O Maw! Chiggah gwine drap over later an' sot fiah to that trash-heap barn. I got to hu'y back an' git them two white hawses. Mistuh Seth, he tol' me to come aftah 'em. It'll be some classy fun'all, folks; an' be'lieve me, you-all's got reserved seats fer the last act with no admisium fee, ner yet no wah tax!"

With this cryptic remark he jumped into Chigger's panting speedster, and rattled into town.

AT LAST the procession formed under the eagle eye of Noah Roach, imported master of ceremonies, and the Reverend Virgil Clathers. Tom and Jerry stood near the front of the line in startling milk-white contrast to the general *motif*. They dozed in the warm sun, nuzzling each other playfully. A more placid, mild-looking pair could not have been found within miles. As Mr. Seth had said, they were fine for a funeral.

The band swung away with a doleful, tinny crash of minor wails. Be-

hind it were the officials and charter members of the Pearly Gates Fraternal Order of Humility and Perfection, in full be-plumed regalia; followed by a squad bearing the banner of the Marathon Ethiope Athletic Club. Tom and Jerry came next, trundling behind them the near-plush housing of the clay which had been Elipse Meldrum, and after them trailed "more than twelve hacks."

The rear guard, snapper on the whip so to speak, was an antiquated touring car bearing three gentlemen of parts—Lethus, Dr. Le Roy Ginch, whom they had enticed to join them, and Deputy Sheriff Perseus Watson Magoon. The hour was four-ten P.M.

A moment later Lister dashed from a neighboring house, and leaped into the tonneau beside Lethus. He had just uttered an urgent telephone message, and at the other end of the line had been Chigger Sneeds.

At four-fifteen Chigger touched a match to the ancient barn on Lister's property, and at four-twenty he was draped in nonchalant apathy against a scarlet fire-alarm box, gazing at the approaching twin whitenesses of the two horses.

Not until the car bearing the three schemers drew opposite, did Chigger move. When he did, there was a delicate deliberation about his action which savored a little of the theatrical. A long wink at Lister in the slow-moving automobile, then he broke the little glass door on the alarm box and pulled down the handle.

It was the first time Chigger had ever rung in a bona fide alarm. This time there was cause of a sort, and he proposed to enjoy the thing to the full. The burning barn might partly be saved by prompt response.

In exactly sixty seconds he got action and plenty of it. First came a wailing siren, then a red flash as a light chemical car rounded a corner in a fog of dust.

At the head of the procession Tom and Jerry heard the almost forgotten sound and pricked up their ears, prancing around a little nervously like a pair of old chargers scenting battle from afar.

As the chemical passed, this prancing changed to a trot, until the tall-hatted Jehu on the box, dragged them back into a safe walk. But when the engine gong sounded for them to pull to one side, it was the last straw.

It whirled past the two old fire horses with a hiss of steam and a scorching plume of sparks. In the

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